

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, March 23, 2012

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Action Item Calendar

Today (March 23): Annual [textbook lists](#) due
Today (March 23): Tech directors to complete [PARCC Readiness report](#)
April 6: Survey on [professional-development plans](#) due
April 13: Deadline for submitting to RIDE [district Teacher of the Year](#) selections
April 20: Estimates of 2012-13 [first-year teachers](#) due
April 27: Recommendations for [Educator Talent Pool](#) due
June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)
July 15: Deadline for final reporting of [evaluation ratings](#)

Note: Commissioner Gist encourages you to share this field memo with your curriculum director and with your principals.

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. RIDE prepared to help districts facing financial challenges

The budget crisis facing the Woonsocket schools and the city of Woonsocket will continue to be a great concern for all of us until the matter is resolved. In response to questions from the media, both Governor Chafee and I have stressed that it is impossible to let the schools in Woonsocket close on April 5, more than two months before the rightful end of the school year. I was heartened to see that the leader of the Woonsocket Teachers Union has indicated that teachers would continue to work as the budget crisis is being resolved. That speaks volumes to their dedication to their students; however, we have to ensure as a state that an early school closing doesn't occur and that all the Woonsocket teachers receive fair pay for their hard work. As I have informed the Board of Regents, I have had conversations with the state Budget Office and with the Governor's Office, and we have offered to provide expertise to help resolve the financial issues facing the Woonsocket schools. The Governor's Office is taking the lead on developing an overall response to this matter, including the proposed legislation the Governor has put forward that would relieve municipalities and school departments of several state mandates.

Of course Woonsocket is not alone in facing budget shortfalls and the need for some very tough decisions in the coming school year. I want to assure you that we at RIDE are prepared to help you develop strategies and initiatives to ensure that you spend taxpayer dollars wisely and continue to serve the best interest of your community and of your students. Our Division of Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies stands ready to provide you with information and consultation, particularly regarding data from the UCOA system that can help identify areas for potential savings. Please let me know if we can provide you with support during these challenging times.

2. Technology bond would provide wireless access for all classrooms

Across Rhode Island, students, teachers, school leaders, and many community members are enthusiastic about the possibilities that technology offers for improving instruction and advancing student achievement. We have a great opportunity to move forward with these innovations in Rhode Island.

Governor Chafee's proposed Fiscal Year 2013 budget includes funding for a \$20-million Technology Infrastructure Capital Bond that will expand wireless access to classrooms across the state over the next three to five years. On Wednesday, I testified before the House Finance Committee in support of this bond. Earlier this month, I also testified on this issue before the House Education Subcommittee and the Senate Finance Committee, and Carolyn Dias has testified on my behalf (because of a time conflict with a Regents meeting) before House Finance as well. The response we have received so far seems positive.

With wireless technology in every classroom, *all* Rhode Island students will have access to opportunities for digital learning. Wireless technology will benefit our teachers as well, as they will have access classroom access to the Instructional Management System and other data

platforms that RIDE is creating. Our investments in technology will benefit all Rhode Island schools, regardless of their current condition or their current level of access to technology.

Governor Chafee has also proposed changes regarding the R.I. Telecommunications Access Fund, which would make an additional \$2.1 million in state and federal fund available to increase the bandwidth capacity of our libraries and schools.

Putting these two investments together – the Technology Bond and the bandwidth expansion – will truly bring our schools to the cutting edge of technology standards. I will continue to advocate on behalf of these two initiatives, and I appreciate the support that RISSA and RIASP have provided for bringing wireless access to our schools and classrooms.

From RIDE:

3. *Corrected:* RIDE to collect aggregate final evaluation ratings

Please see this corrected notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification; the time frame for this collection of information was incorrect in the Field Memo sent last Friday, and has been corrected in the version below and in the version posted on our website:

During the *current school year*, RIDE will collect aggregate final evaluation ratings for teachers and building administrators (e.g., 10 teachers were rated Highly Effective; 50 teachers were rated Effective; 30 teachers were rated Developing; and 10 teachers were rated ineffective) from every LEA, regardless of the educator-evaluation system being implemented. The ratings are being collected for federal reporting and informational purposes only. Later this spring, RIDE will provide LEAs with a template for reporting aggregate final evaluation ratings, and the deadline for reporting final ratings is July 15. In future years, educator-evaluation ratings will be collected through the Educator Performance and Support System.

4. *Reminder:* Annual listing of textbooks due today (March 23)

Please see this reminder from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

LEAs are required to submit a complete listing of all textbooks planned for use during the 2012-13 academic year to RIDE, using eRIDE. Instructions for the use of the eRIDE system, including detailed information about uploading textbook titles and ISBN numbers, can be accessed at:

https://www.eride.ri.gov/default_secure.asp.

Additional information and an FAQ can be accessed at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/RIDE/TextbookInventory.aspx>

All districts must update the complete list of textbooks for use in 2012-13 by **today** (March 23).

Any inquiries regarding the program should be addressed to Rosemary Burns, at 222-8483 or Rosemary.Burns@ride.ri.gov. If you have technical issues regarding the use of eRIDE, inquire at helpdesk@ride.ri.gov or 222-8400.

5. *Reminder: RIDE to hold webinar Thursday for district teams to share ideas on educator evaluations*

Please see this reminder from our Race to the Top team:

What: This is a reminder to register for a webinar on educator-evaluation implementation for superintendents, principals, and other administrators

Who: RIDE and District Administration Teams

When: **Thursday** (March 29), 4 - 5:30 p.m.

Where: Online – register here:

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/948347350>

Why: This webinar will be an opportunity for district teams to share with their peers how they are approaching educator-evaluation implementation.

6. *RIDE to provide information on ELA interim assessments in webinar on Tuesday*

Please see this announcement from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

As part of the Race to the Top Interim Assessments project, RIDE will be offering three annual fixed-form interim assessments, starting this fall. Together with our vendor, Measured Progress, RIDE has drafted test specifications for the ELA content to be assessed in grades 3 through 11. The assessments focus only on the Common Core State Standards.

ELA educators in grades 3 through 11, as well as other educators with ELA content knowledge (including curriculum directors, assistant superintendents, department chairs, et al.) are encouraged to participate in a brief webinar on **Tuesday** (March 27), at 3 p.m.

During this webinar, we will share the assessment design and test specifications for the ELA assessments, as well as answer questions about the assessments. The math assessments will not be discussed in detail on this webinar, as feedback on those assessments was recently collected from the field; however, please check the website below for updates pertaining to both math and ELA.

To participate, please do the following:

Review the ELA test specifications on our website:

www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/Interim.aspx

Access the webinar online, at:

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/824606270>

Call in to the number provided through the webinar.

If you are unable to participate in the webinar, you can listen to the recording, which will be posted here:

www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/Interim.aspx

If you have any questions about the upcoming webinar or the interim assessments in general, please contact Jessica Brown, by e-mail (Jessica.Brown@RIDE.RI.GOV) or phone (222-8253).

7. NECAP Science test-administration workshops announced

Please see the following message from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

The NECAP Science test window is May 7 to May 24 this year, and all schools with grades 4, 8, or 11 are required to participate. Test materials will be delivered to schools the week of April 23 and picked up after testing on May 25. The test will include three sessions; the first two are a written component similar to other NECAP tests, and the third is a performance assessment (the Inquiry Task), which is “hands-on,” at grade 4.

Test administration workshops have been scheduled to help prepare district and school test coordinators for the test. They are scheduled for the following dates and times (*Note: Both cover the same material, so there is no need to attend both workshops.*):

- April 24, at the Providence Marriott Downtown, 1 Orms St. 02904 (1 – 3 p.m.)
- April 25, at the Radisson Hotel, 2081 Post Rd., Warwick 02886 (9 – 11 a.m.)

Registration for workshops can be done online by going to <http://iregister.measuredprogress.org>, selecting “New England Common Assessment Program” from the drop-down menu, clicking “Enter” and selecting a workshop, and then following the online directions. On-site, in-person registration will also be available on the day of each workshop 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.

Workshop attendance is strongly encouraged, as the latest information on NECAP testing policies and procedures as well as information about test security will be provided.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov), or 222-8494).

8. RIDE announces Civics GSEs and Common Core Educator Engagement Grants

Please see this announcement from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

The Civics GSEs and Common Core State Standards Educator Engagement Grants are envisioned as an opportunity for Rhode Island educators to deeply engage with the Civics GSEs and the Common Core State Standards and to creatively think of ways to implement these standards in their classrooms.

RIDE is looking for new and innovative ideas for implementation of the Common Core and the Civics GSEs in elementary, civics, history, social studies, or government classrooms through curriculum resources, content-knowledge development, or other innovative, high-quality projects.

Project teams will consist of teachers and other educators working collaboratively, and the teams may include a higher-education or community-organization partner. The total grant pool is \$9,000, with an anticipated maximum of 9 grants awarded. Educators from all grade levels are encouraged to apply.

The application deadline is **April 9**, with award announcements to be made by April 13. [Submission instructions](#) and [application](#) can be found on this page:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/civics.aspx>.

9. RIDE transitioning to new process for collection of personnel-assignment information

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

School districts are currently submitting staffing information to RIDE via the Personnel Assignment Process. This process is being redesigned to allow districts to report staffing information for instructional and non-instructional staff members, which is required by federal and Board of Regents guidelines. This new system, the Personnel Assignment Collection, will streamline our data-collection efforts. The Personnel Assignment Collection will be a stand-alone system, accessed via e-RIDE.

An initial information session will be offered to human-resource contacts on the Personnel Assignment Collection (PAC) on April 11. This session will highlight the changes to the collection and will help districts prepare to transition into the new collection process. It is critical that each LEA attend this session so that everyone can understand the changes and prepare to transition into the new system.

To register please go to:

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/Register.aspx?workshopid=431>

Stay tuned for additional information sessions on this topic. As always, if you have any questions or feedback, do not hesitate to contact Hilda:

Hilda Potrzeba at hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov or 222-8891.

10. RIDE adds locations for Summer Training Academies for evaluators

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Registration is open for the Summer Training Academies for Personnel Evaluating Teachers and for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators. The Academies are being offered at multiple locations across the state, including Northern Rhode Island, West Bay, and South County. Specific dates for both Academies are below:

The four-day Academy for Personnel Evaluating Teachers will be offered July 9 - 13, July 16 - 20, August 6 - 10, August 14 - 17, and August 20 - 24.

The two-day Academy for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators will be offered July 12 - 13, July 19 - 20, August 9 - 10, August 16 - 17, and August 23 - 24.

All personnel in LEAs implementing the Rhode Island Model for teachers or building administrators are required to attend the appropriate Academy(ies). Evaluators can register by going to the eRIDE Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

11. RIDE to host webinar on the new Educator Evaluation Performance and Support System - *Reminder*

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

This is a reminder that, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. on April 4, RIDE will conduct an informational webinar about the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS). Participants may register for this session at:

<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/760803534>

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>